

African American History Month

February 2010

African American History Month, also called Black History Month, has been observed since the Nation's bicentennial in 1976 as a way to recall and commemorate the achievements and history of Americans of African descent. Its origins are found in what was originally known as Negro History Week, established in the 1920s through the efforts of Dr. Carter G. Woodson and other African American scholars and observed during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. Presented here are BLS data that provide an economic snapshot of African Americans in the United States today.

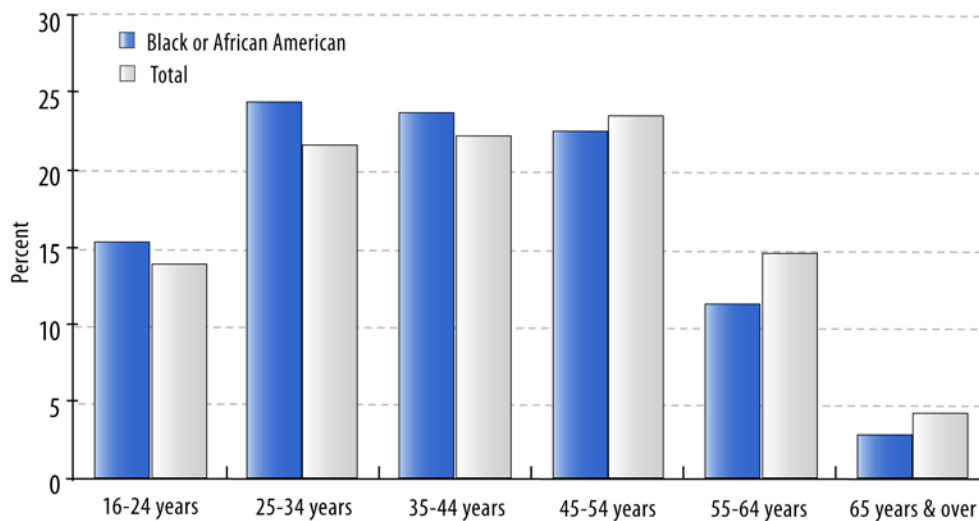


African Americans in the Labor Force

In 2009, there were 17.6 million African Americans in the labor force — accounting for 11 percent of all Americans aged 16 years and older who were employed or looking for work. The African American labor force is younger than the total labor force; 63 percent of African American labor force participants are under the age of 45, compared with 58 percent of all labor force participants.

African Americans in the Labor Force

Percent distribution of total and black or African American labor force by age, 2009



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

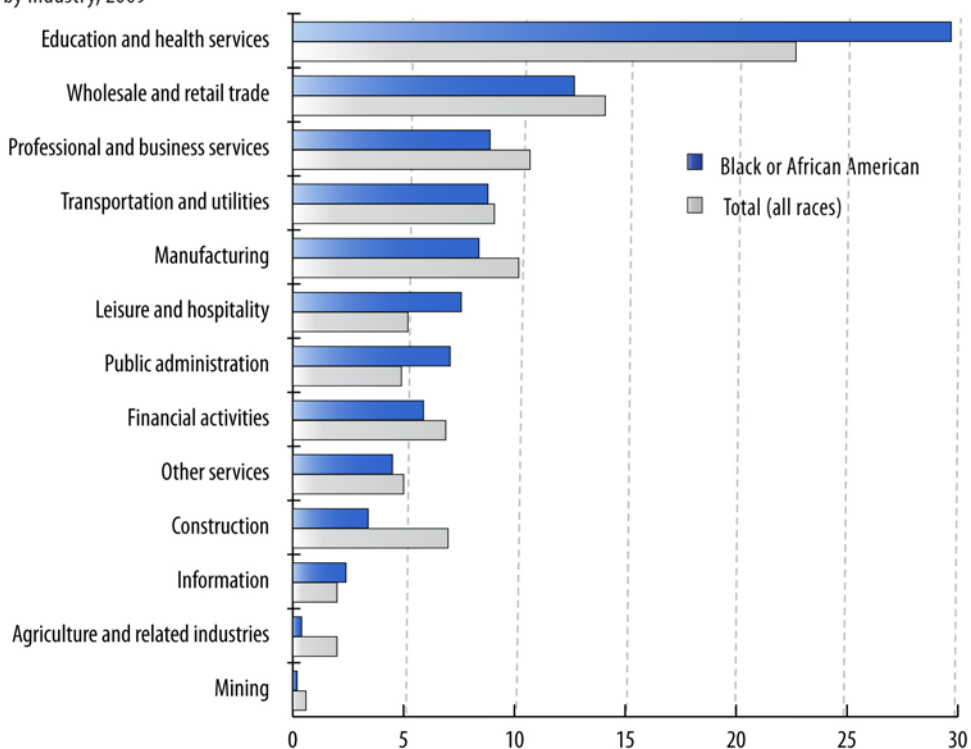
Source: Current Population Survey

Employment by Industry

Of those African Americans in the labor force, about 15 million were employed in 2009. More worked in the education and health services sector than in any other industry sector. In 2009, there were about 4.5 million African Americans — 30 percent of employed African Americans — working in education and health services. Among all employed persons in the United States, 23 percent were employed in education and health services.

Employment by Industry

Percent distribution of black or African American employed persons and total employed persons, 16 years and over, by industry, 2009



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

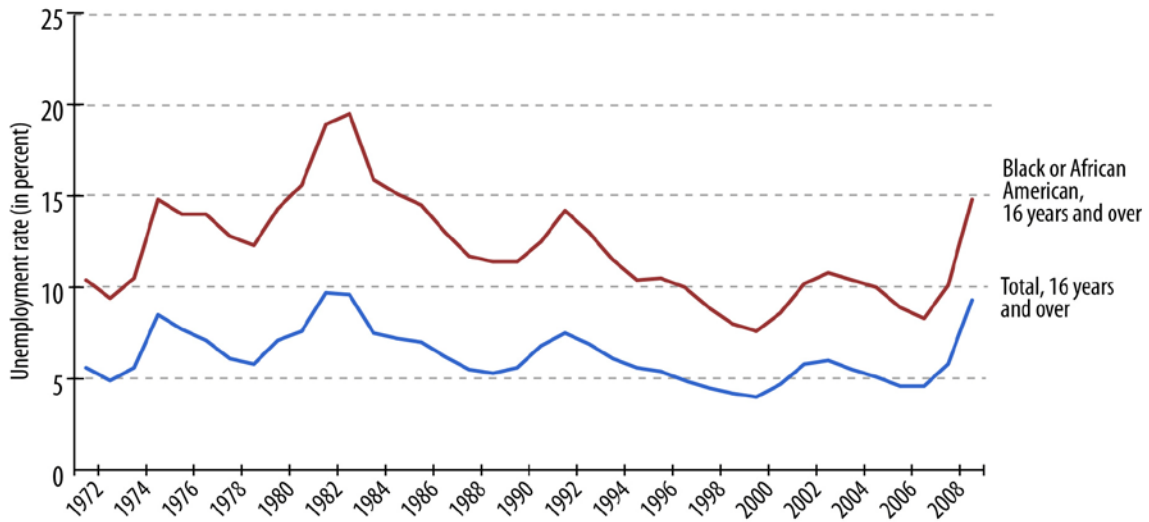
Source: Current Population Survey

Unemployment rate

Historically the unemployment rate for African Americans age 16 years and over has been higher than that of the total labor force.

Unemployment rate

Unemployment rates, total and black or African American, 16 years and over, 1972-2009, annual averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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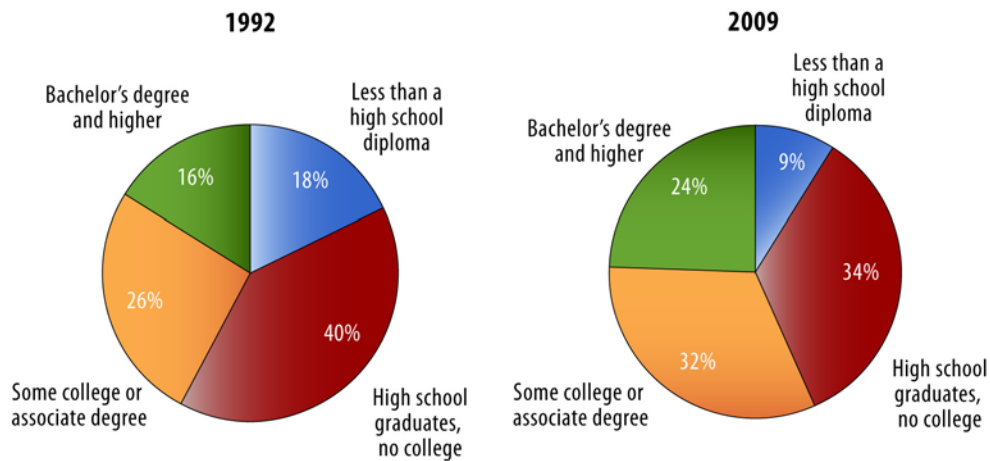
Source: Current Population Survey

Educational Attainment

In 1992, eighteen percent of the African Americans in the labor force had not graduated from high school. By 2009, that figure had declined by one-half to 9 percent. Of note, African Americans in the labor force that had graduated from college increased from 16 percent in 1992 to 24 percent in 2009.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment of blacks or African Americans in the labor force, 25 years and over



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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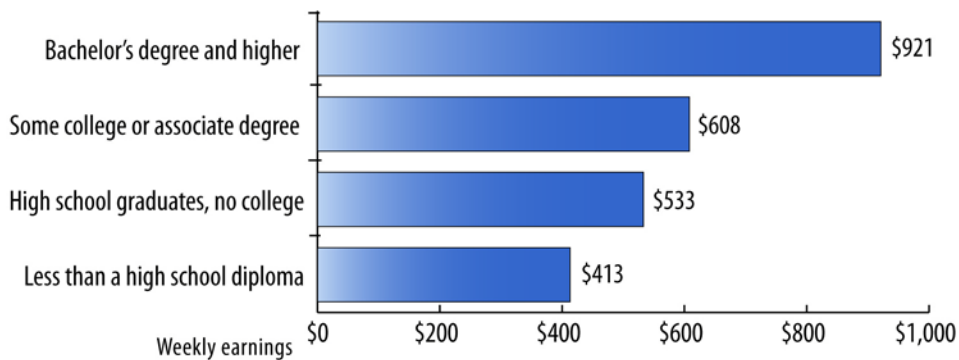
Source: Current Population Survey

More School, More Earnings

Higher education leads to higher earnings. African Americans graduating with a bachelor's degree and higher degree earn more than twice as much as those with less than a high school diploma.

More School, More Earnings

Median usual weekly earnings of black or African American full-time wage and salary workers 25 years and over by educational attainment, 2009



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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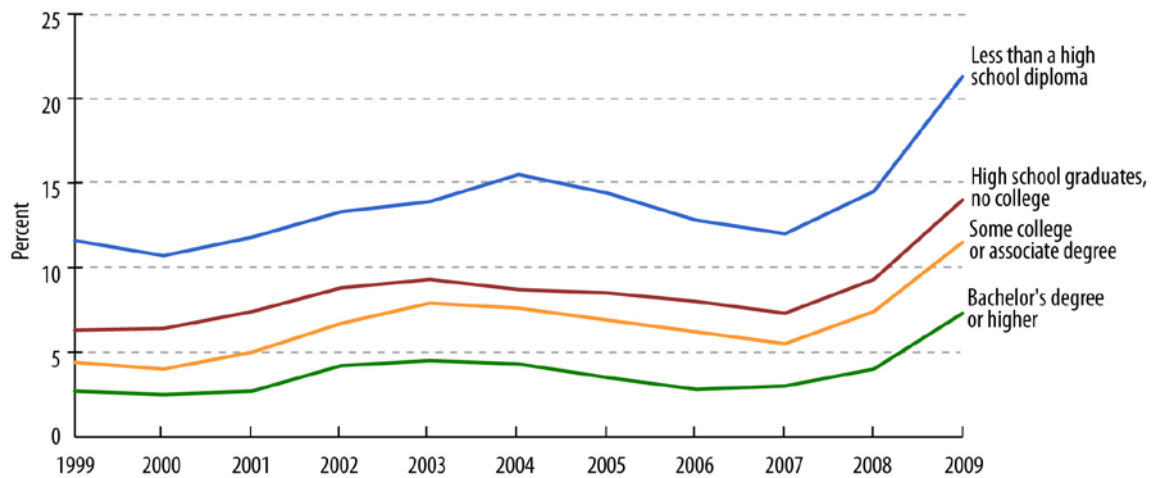
Source: Current Population Survey

Additional Education, Less Unemployment

Unemployment rates fall as educational attainment increases as well. In 2009, the unemployment rate for African Americans 25 years and over without a high school diploma was over 21 percent, while the jobless rates for high school graduates and those graduating with a bachelor’s degree and higher were 14.0 and 7.3, respectively.

Additional Education, Less Unemployment

Unemployment rates of blacks or African Americans age 25 years and over by educational attainment, 1999-2009



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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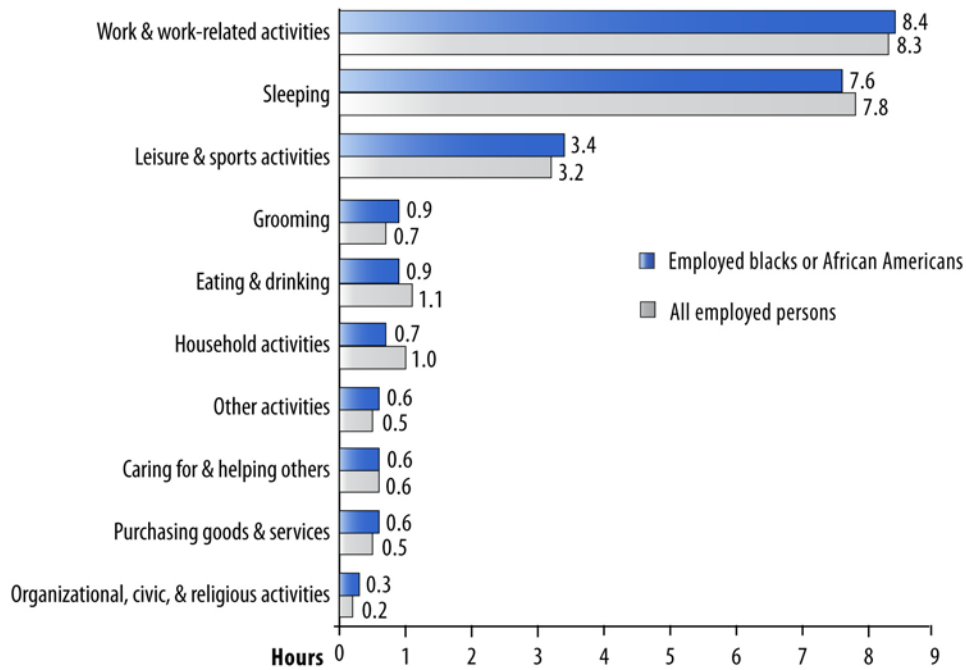
Source: Current Population Survey

Time Use

There is more to life than work; the American Time Use Survey measures the amount of time devoted each day to various activities. The chart below shows how employed African Americans and employed persons in the total U.S. population spend time on an average workday.

Time Use

Average time use of all employed persons and employed blacks or African Americans 18 years and over on work days, 2008



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

Source: American Time Use Survey

More Info

General Information

For more information, please call (202) 691-5200.

Media Contact

The news media can contact the BLS Press Officer at (202) 691-5902.

Note: Data in text, charts and tables are the latest available at the time of publication. Internet links may lead to more recent data.